

Newlon News



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Welcome to the winter edition of Newlon news.

Christmas closure times

We will be closed for the festive period from 12:30pm on Friday 24th December until Tuesday 4th January. During this time our contractors will only provide emergency repairs, which include total electricity loss and major leaks. In these instances our contractors will 'make safe' and may be able to do a full repair provided extensive works are not needed. If additional works need to be approved we cannot do this until we reopen.

If you have an emergency repair that Newlon is responsible for please phone **020 7613 8080**, where a recorded message will direct you to the contractor providing emergency cover. Please note we will not be able to reply to any text messages or emails over the closure period.

Visiting our offices - by appointment only

As part of our ongoing response to the coronavirus pandemic our head office remains closed to visitors, except by appointment.

In common with many organisations Newlon has adopted hybrid working. This means that the majority of staff members are spending part of the week working from home and part of the time in the office.

Therefore please do not come to our offices without a prearranged appointment, as we cannot guarantee that the member of staff you need to see will be in the office rather than working from home. If you come for an in-person appointment at our head office you will need to show proof of a negative lateral flow or PCR test taken no more than 72 hours before attending.

We can also arrange to carry out appointments through video conferencing such as Zoom. Separate local arrangements remain in place for residents on the Barnsbury Estate and in our Royal Free Hospital key worker accommodation.



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Residents' Forum

update from the Chair



Lloyd Gale-Ward, Chair

The Residents' Forum is a group of residents who meet every three months to look at Newlon's work and monitor performance.

The Residents' Forum met via Zoom for their October meeting. We had the pleasure of being joined by the Newlon Chair, Aman Dalvi, for his first forum meeting. Aman informed members of his long and impressive career within housing, and that his first priority will be to invest in existing homes. He went on to say that Newlon's development of new homes has slowed down in favour of increased investment in fire safety measures and cyclical maintenance.

Aman added that he is keen for residents to be more involved in decisions and for greater levels of meaningful engagement.

Graham Watts, Head of Resident Services, presented an update on the Resident Involvement strategy. He explained how the team had examined the requirements of the Government's Social Housing White Paper - which was developed in response to the Grenfell tragedy. The Strategy is now more streamlined and seeks to be aligned with the White Paper.

Emma Preston-Dunlop, Senior Resident Involvement Officer, updated members on the Think Tank, which acts as a way of obtaining a broader perspective of residents' views quickly. The Think Tank is designed as a way for staff to carry out light touch surveys and engage more consistently and efficiently with residents.

Duncan Lee, Head of Repairs, explained how European workers leaving the UK is causing difficulties for Wates, Newlon's main responsive maintenance contractor, resulting in some delays to carrying out repairs. We learned that the contractor had made a donation to Newlon's Hardship Fund - a fund that is available for residents at times of crisis.

Jodie Desai, Head of Strategic Asset Management, also mentioned the issues of workers leaving the UK and added that there are huge problems with deliveries and supply chains at present. For example - delivery times for windows have increased from 6-10 weeks to 26 weeks. Costs have also increased, some by as much as 30%, since Brexit. It is hoped the situation will improve in 2022.

Judith Perry, Resident Involvement Officer, reported the results from the latest mystery shopping exercise. In all 50 interactions were reported, with a slight drop in Newlon Gold level response rate to 78%.

Three people attended the meeting as observers and were invited to join as provisional members of the Forum. If you are interested in joining the Residents' Forum, or have any questions about resident involvement please email getinvolved@newlon.org.uk.

Here to help residents

Newlon's Resident Services team has been working hard to support residents in precarious employment and households receiving welfare benefits as well as many of our most vulnerable residents.

You can find out more about the advice and support we can offer as well as a range of helpful links at www.newlon.org.uk/resident-services-help.

You can also find information and guidance on financial support for those affected by COVID-19 at www.newlon.org.uk/financial-support-coronavirus.



Recent updates to policies and procedures

Decant policy and procedure - We have made a minor change to the food allowance for decanted residents who have been temporarily placed in B&B accommodation. We will now pay a food allowance of £10 per day per adult and £5 per day per child under 10.

Flat-sitting and lodgers - We have adjusted our policy to note that we can now request an occupational declaration form to be filled in to determine occupancy numbers. This will only happen if it is unclear how many people are currently living at a property.

Complaints procedure - We have changed the way we handle informal complaints which are escalated to a formal level. When this happens the issue will then be handled by a member of the Service Resolution Team who has not previously been involved with dealing with the complaint.

The Think Tank

RESIDENT think tank

The Think Tank is a new resident involvement group at Newlon. Made up of around 200 residents who choose their level of involvement from very light touch to more hands

on, it is a way for Newlon to hear residents' views and ideas about decisions that affect you and the services you receive.

Newlon would like to say a big thank you to those residents who have already agreed to be part of the Think Tank. Staff have been receiving training, so please don't be surprised if you receive a call over the coming months for your feedback or input on an aspect of our services. Your opinions really matter to us, which is why the Think Tank was created.

In acknowledgement of your time and contribution, every year all Think Tank members will be entered into a prize draw to win one of two £100 vouchers. Residents that are involved three times or more over the period of a year (April 1st - March 31st) are also entitled to a £50 voucher.

What are the benefits of getting involved with Newlon?

Here are a couple of good reasons to take part in making Newlon better:

- You'll play a part in helping us improve how we look after residents' homes and have a greater say in your community.
- You'll meet other residents and possibly make new friends.

If you're not sure what involvement might mean for you, you can chat about it with a team member by calling us on **020 7613 8084** or **020 7033 4605**. Alternatively you can email getinvolved@newlon.org.uk, or find out more online at www.newlon.org.uk/residents/getting-involved.

Bin it, don't flush it!



Many of our residents suffer the misery of blocked drains every year, as a result of unsuitable items being flushed down the toilet or washed away down the kitchen drain.

The majority of blockages are caused by cooking fat and oil, wet wipes and sanitary items. Each year, Newlon spends in excess of £250,000 as a direct result of blockages and breakdown of drainage and water pump systems. This could easily be avoided by our residents simply changing the way they dispose of their rubbish and food waste.

As crude as it sounds, the drainage and sewer systems are designed to only take **the three P's: pee, poo and paper!**

Even some items that are marketed as "flushable" or "biodegradable" contribute to blockages.

What can you do to help?

- Make sure only water, toilet tissue and wastewater goes down your drains and into the sewers. **No nappies, sanitary products or wet wipes please.**
- After cooking, fat and oil should be left to cool, and thrown away in your bin.
- **No paint, engine oil, solvents or chemicals** should be disposed of down the toilet or sink.

Do your bit...bin it, don't flush it!

Subletting is a crime

Residents living in social housing are committing a criminal offence if they sublet their home. Unlawful subletting of social housing is a serious matter.

As well as the risk of being prosecuted, you could also lose your home.

For the wider community subletting has a negative impact as there are thousands of people on local authority housing needs waiting lists. Therefore, if Newlon housing is being sublet and fewer homes are available it means that people who have a genuine need for a home will have a longer wait or could be offered housing that is not necessarily suitable for them.

Newlon takes all cases and allegations of subletting very seriously, ensuring that we investigate and prosecute where necessary. Penalties for subletting can range from fines to prison sentences or in certain cases, both. You may also be asked to pay back any profit you made to Newlon via an unlawful profit order.

Shared Owners are also not allowed to sublet, except in exceptional circumstances. 100% leaseholders, can usually sublet but do need to inform Newlon of the intention to do so. Airbnb is not permitted in any circumstances.

Please be vigilant and if you suspect that subletting is happening in a Newlon home please contact asb@newlon.org.uk to report it. The information you provide will be treated in the strictest of confidence.



Resident Inspectors - making a difference to their communities

At Newlon we support residents to become Resident Inspectors to take part in inspecting the areas where they live. Inspectors play an important role in helping us ensure that their estates or blocks are clean, safe and an attractive place to live.

On the 10th November we held a Resident Inspector training and Information session for people interested in becoming Resident Inspectors as well as our current Resident Inspectors.

19 residents attended and the event was filled with positive energy. Staff members provided information about the role and explained what happens to communal repairs raised in resident or joint inspections with our Estate Inspectors.

Current Resident Inspectors shared their experiences, including feedback about their positive experiences as well as issues with poor repairs and communications. Following on from the event we will be connecting interested residents with Newlon's Estate Inspectors so they can carry out joint estate inspections.

If you would like to find out more, please contact the Resident Involvement team at getinvolved@newlon.org.uk.

Learning from complaints

We are continuing our work to understand the cause of common complaints and to put solutions in place to try and stop similar problems reoccurring.

Recent initiatives include setting up a special project team to tackle issues with damp and mould and work to improve our overall approach to managing roof leaks.

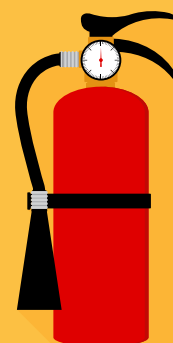
To ensure oversight of our work on learning from complaints we involve our complaints panel, which is made up of residents. The panel reviews progress and holds us to account where it looks like issues are not being effectively addressed.

The panel usually meet every two months with Newlon's heads of service. At the last session, Symon Sentain, our Property Services Director talked about plans to introduce improvements to managing roof repairs. The panel welcomed the proposals but also asked for clarification around how the proposed steps such as a new roof repairs tracker would translate into improved performance.

Fire safety – keeping safe in your home

Following a couple of minor recent incidents here are two small but important things to check up on:

- If you have a tumble dryer please regularly check and clean the fluff filter and remove any build-up of material.
- Please do not pack or store goods too closely around electrical equipment in storage cupboards. Some cupboards also provide a site for equipment such as fuse boxes or meters, please do not pack anything tightly around any such items and make sure you leave at least some air or breathing space around them.



Wellbeing programmes at our community centres



Newlon's community centres have remained opened throughout the pandemic, providing a wide range of wellbeing and support programmes for our residents and local communities.

Although we had to pause some of our larger group activities, a number of these groups have restarted at the Barnsbury Community Centre including:

- Exercise classes (women only) – Focusing on the physical fitness, health and wellbeing of our residents, led by a professional instructor. We also offer, linked to these classes, coffee and crafts sessions, which have been very popular with Barnsbury residents.
- Islington Bangladeshi Association (IBA) (women only) is offering free online exercise and fitness classes from Yoga to Aerobics. If you would like to take part please contact syeda@ibal.org.uk or call **07305 989 182**.
- Philosophy discussions – Dr. Bill Thompson is not only a philosopher, he is also an architect, and has lived on the Barnsbury Estate for over 30 years. Meetings will take place in the Barnsbury Community Centre between 6pm and 8pm on the **second Friday of each month**. To register, please email bill@billthompson.info.
- Tutors United – Tutors United deliver confidence boosting, attainment raising tutorials to primary school pupils in school years 4, 5 and 6 (ages 8-11 years old). Spaces on the programme are limited so sign up now to secure your child's place. If your child doesn't receive a space straight away, they will be put onto our waiting list and you will be contacted when a space becomes available. To sign up, please fill in our online registration form at: <https://tutorsunited.org/register-your-child> or email lizzy.gribble@tutorsunited.org if you have any questions.
- Gardening – we have continued to maintain gardening spaces at the Barnsbury Estate with the help of our local volunteers managed by Islington Bangladeshi Association.
- Youth Club (for Barnsbury Estate residents only) Creative youth club services for 11-19 years old, run by GenZ. The youth club is held at the centre on Thursday evenings.

All of these services are free of charge to Newlon Residents. If you want more information about our community centre wellbeing programmes or any of the activities listed above contact us at community.services@newlon.org.uk.

Remedial works and form EWS1 update

We have started to receive updates from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities about the Building Safety Fund bids we have made on behalf of residents at a number of schemes. In several cases funding has now been confirmed and we will continue to communicate with residents on a scheme by scheme basis as we hear news.

This means that we can start to finalise the process of procuring or appointing contractors to carry out the required works for several blocks and should soon be able to share the proposed works programmes with residents.

Where we have successfully received funding this will protect residents against the costs of the works programmes.

We have recently emailed and written to all leaseholders and Shared Owners to set out the complexities affecting people trying to sell, staircase or re-mortgage their homes. The current situation can be difficult due to fire safety inspections and potential remedial works requirements, or because of lenders' requests for form EWS1.

We sympathise with residents affected by these issues and understand how frustrating they can be. The Government has made some further announcements about withdrawing a specific piece of guidance known as the 'consolidated advice note'. This is generally seen as the driver for lenders requesting form EWS1 for some buildings below 18 metres (usually less than seven storeys) in height where an EWS1 is not required. The recently appointed Housing Minister, Michael Gove, has undertaken to withdraw the consolidated advice note, but as yet has not done so. We hope that this will happen in the near future as it should make it easier for people to get mortgages for homes under 18 metres in height.

Please refer to the fire safety section on our website at www.newlon.org.uk/fire-safety for further information if you are considering selling or staircasing or re-mortgaging your home. Please bear in mind that there are potential costs involved in any of these processes and you should take these into account, including the risk that your transaction may not be successful, before going ahead.



Events in your area

King's Cross Christmas Markets

When? Until the 19th December

Where? Kings Cross, N1

Cost? Free entry

Get into the Christmas spirit by exploring the festive stalls at King's Cross, showcasing an eclectic mix of independent and boutique brands, designers, creatives, and craft makers. Running everyday through to Sunday December 19th.

<https://www.kingscross.co.uk/christmas>

A Christmas Circus Fairy Tale

When? 17th December – 2nd January

(excl. 22nd 25th 30th December)

Where? Jacksons Lane, N6

Price? £14.95

Watch in awe, as acrobatics and circus skills are used to retell a collection of traditional fairy tales. This is your chance to see handsome princes and ugly sisters as you've never seen them before, stepping out of the storybook to dance in the air, fly across the stage and dazzle with their fantastical feats.

www.jacksonslane.org.uk/events/a-christmas-circus-fairytale

Sleeping Beauty Pantomime

When? 10th December – 24th December

Where? Hoxton Hall, N1

Cost? From £8

Come and join us this festive season with the magical family pantomime Sleeping Beauty. With a hilarious comic, an outrageous dame, a devilish baddie, a dashing hero, tons of adventure and bags of slapstick fun, this classic, romantic fairy tale promises to enthrall audiences of all ages whether you are 3 or 103!

www.hoxtonhall.co.uk/event/sleeping-beauty

Christmas Tales

When? 4th - 29th December

Where? Chickenshed, N14

Cost? £10 or £35 family ticket

Make way for this colourful, energetic and vibrant show. With puppets, singing, dancing and some larger-than-life characters, Christmas Tales is guaranteed to entertain the very youngest (and oldest!) of audiences.

www.chickenshed.org.uk/Event/christmas-tales-chickenshed-21

Bohemia Place Christmas Market

When? Every weekend until 19th December

Where? Bohemia Place Markets, E8

Cost? Free

Feast your eyes on an incredible selection of hot and cold food stalls with everything from vegan stews, slow cooked pork and festive burgers to a variety of sweet treats. Wash it down with a glass of something hot and mulled or any of the Christmas-themed cocktails available as you peruse everything Bohemia Place Christmas Market has to offer.

<https://bohemiaplacemarket.com/welcome>

The Christmas Skate Experience

When? Every weekend and throughout school holidays

Where? Alexandra Palace, N22

Cost? From £6

Book onto a Christmas skate session, or head to one of the Christmas Club de Fromage discos where you can whizz around to Christmas tunes before enjoying a mulled wine in the nearby Ice Café. The Christmas Skate Experience is available every weekend from November 27, as well as throughout the school holidays between December 18th and January 3rd.

alexandrapalace.com/the-ice-rink/book-now



Think global, act local

Jeannie Lowen – Newlon resident

The local global planter

Recently I collaborated with my neighbour Sadiq to design and create a garden storage unit/planter to fit in a very narrow space in our yard. Sadiq did all the hard construction work, while I researched a few design ideas and sourced the doors and hinges.

It was mostly made out of a handy old wooden bed frame which was being disposed of and some wooden floor panels. The doors and other parts we had to buy but these were paid for out of our residents' community funds. It came to about £40 in total; a real bargain and also a great recycling of bulk rubbish – we are striving for that Net Zero goal! From scrap, Sadiq created a fabulous unit for us to store our communal gardening tools and it looks beautiful. We are very pleased.

It made me consider the advantages of our residents' group and the very real benefits of the group to our neighbourhood. It brought to mind the phrase 'think global, act local'. Local, as in your direct neighbourhood, and global as in everything wider than that. I first came across this expression a long time ago in Fritz Schumacher's influential book 'Small Is Beautiful'. He was one of the original thinkers about a sustainable green economy.

Local development

Having the communal garden has fostered a really good neighbourhood here. We have made friendships and networks of support. Just from a simple thing like a garden. When I first came here it was a dark, pebbly, weedy, wasteland. A group of neighbours slowly transformed this difficult strip of land into the wonderful resource we now enjoy. We get the joys of nature and wildlife right in the heart of Spitalfield.

Global development

As a group we first really came together as an active unit around the myriad of planning applications we were being inundated with. Our community is on the edge of the city. I sit here surrounded by large scale developments, literally one on every corner.

Members of our residents group now take part in monthly update meetings with the largest development project here run by British Land. This has paid dividends – we are now closely consulted on matters which have a significant impact on the neighbourhood such as road closures. They have also made a contribution to our upcoming communal window cleaning project, due to occur next spring.

Neighbours have taken part in planning consultations around London Wall and The Museum of London, pushing for more green space.

Local engagement

Because we have the residents' group, members of our community are regularly invited to take part in various Newlon resident engagement activities – things like resident inspectors to feedback on estate upkeep and repairs, taking part in presentations when the new cleaning contracts were being setup, representing residents on recruitment interview panels and providing feedback on quality control for services.

Global engagement

Members took part in some of the early consultations on the Government White Paper on Social Housing, meeting with the then minister, Kit Malthouse.

We have attended conferences and training with Tpas. Tpas is an organisation which promotes, supports and champions tenant involvement and empowerment in social housing across England. I recently joined some of the online Net Zero week events hosted by Tpas. These sessions are usually very informative and galvanising.

Think global, act local

It occurs to me in considering our resident groups activities – that small acts can reverberate and affect the wider world beyond our little neighbourhood. That in our interconnected world, the local is global and the global is local.

Take a break at Nutley Edge



Nutley Edge is a beautiful rural property overlooking the stunning landscape of the Ashdown Forest, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It offers some of the most picturesque holiday cottages in East Sussex.

Originally a working farm, the buildings were converted into self-catering holiday cottages in 2011 and opened to the public soon after. Nutley Edge is the perfect destination for couples, families or groups looking to 'get away from it all' and enjoy the peace and quiet of the East Sussex countryside. It's located just an hour from London by train and is easy to get to by car.

Nutley Edge belongs to Outward, a charity that supports vulnerable people in north and east London, and is part of the Newlon Group. All profits from Nutley Edge go to providing better care and support for Outward's residents, so your stay will be benefiting some of London's most vulnerable people.

You can pick from twelve well equipped cottages that sleep up to four people, and you also have the option of staying

in a 17th century farmhouse, which sleeps up to eight. Some of the cottages have wheelchair access and all are pet friendly.

Alternatively, you may wish to stay in one of Nutley Edge's two new glamping tents. Each four metre bell tent is furnished to provide you with a cosy, slightly luxurious glamping experience. Situated in the lower paddock, the glamping area is fenced off for your privacy with views facing over our ancient gill wood and wildlife pond. Kitted out with a double bed and two single camping mats with sleeping bags, as well as compostable toilet, shared kitchen area and individual fire pits, they comfortably sleep four people.

Nutley Edge can also cater for larger groups. So if you are celebrating a birthday or wedding anniversary and are looking for a venue with large capacity then it could be ideal.

There are good rates for Newlon residents. To learn more about Nutley Edge and book your stay please visit their website at www.nutleyedge.org.uk or call 01825 712 377.

Be environmentally friendly by getting your newsletters digitally

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Write for your newsletter

Do you have an idea for an article for this newsletter? We welcome articles from residents of all ages. If we publish it we will send you £20 in vouchers of your choice! Send your article idea to newsletters@newlon.org.uk

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